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Dear Chairpersons Representative Steinberg and Senator Daugherty Abrams, Ranking members Senator Hwang, Senator Somers and Representative Petit and the honorable members of the Public Health Committee.

I am writing to you in SUPPORT of House Bill No. 5275: **AN ACT PROHIBITING CERTAIN HEALTH CARRIERS FROM REQUIRING STEP THERAPY FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS USED TO TREAT MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONDITIONS.**

I am a psychiatrist practicing in CT and I have experience dating back to 1975 when I finished my residency program in CT. I have twenty-seven and a half years in private practice working at my office in Vernon and later fourteen years at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown CT as an employed Physician. I also did Locum in California 2 winters and in one winter over the last 18 months I have done Part-time Locum in state facilities namely Capitol Region Mental Health Center in Hartford.

For the last 10 or so years, I have also been a member of State Medicaid Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee.

During my Professional life I have worked in inpatient settings, outpatient settings and day treatment settings. I have also had administrative experience running an inpatient program in Manchester CT (Before it became a part of ECHN). Additionally, I was the Medical Director for Day Hospital and Outpatient programs for several years during Middlesex experience too.

In my experience, formulary restrictions create more problems than helping. Psychiatric population are somewhat different from general (medical) populations. In that they may be more often than not be ambivalent about getting treatment. The neurophysiology of the illnesses and pharmacology is also quite different for patients who do not have a psychiatric diagnosis. There are very few biological markers to help guide us through the medication selection process. Step Therapy may slow down the process of starting a new medication. I have had difficult times finding which medications were tried and which dosage, and length of the treatment by going through the charts. In spite of sophisticated electronic health records, the information is not readily available to a busy practitioner. Patients often cannot tell us accurately the information, which is needed for documentation.

People with a mental health condition who can't access the most appropriate, clinically indicated psychiatric medication experience higher rates of emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and utilization of other health services. Policies restricting access to medications have been shown—in a variety of published studies—to cause increases in hospitalizations, lengthier hospital stays, more emergency room visits, more outpatient hospital visits, and more physician visits. There are studies showing that the more restrictions to the Psychotropic medication regime is put on, there are more costly ER visits and patients' quality of life suffer

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Therefore, I support the House Bill No. 5275, which would eliminate the need for STEP therapy.

Respectfully submitted

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